

Health Care

Health care has long been one of my top priorities in Congress. My goal is to make sure that all Americans have access to affordable quality health care. However, in order to achieve this goal, we must reduce the costs of medical services, equipment, insurance, and prescription drugs. These costs are increasing at a faster rate than personal incomes, resulting in many families no longer being able to afford the health care they need. I believe that our health care challenges can be addressed without sacrificing high quality and access to care.

We must recognize that each individual's health care needs are unique and a "one-size-fits-all" approach will not foster a system of patient-centered care where health care decisions are made by a patient and his or her doctor. As Co-Chairman of the House Rural Health Care Coalition, I recognize that rural Americans face a unique combination of health care factors and challenges not found in urban areas. For example, hospitals across Kansas are diverse in size and resources. In fact, the First Congressional District alone has 75 hospitals - the most of any congressional district in the country. I have visited each of these hospitals in order to understand the distinct challenges facing each facility. I am committed to introducing and supporting legislation that addresses the obstacles that rural health care providers and facilities must overcome to provide quality health care to Kansans.

We can expand access to health care for all Americans by expanding accessibility to insurance coverage, reforming our malpractice tort system, bringing our health care system into the 21st Century, increasing transparency in health care quality and cost, and placing a greater emphasis on disease prevention and patient wellness. Congress must address these factors in order to find a permanent solution to our health care challenges and it is my hope that we will have a true exchange of ideas and work together to bring much needed change to our current system.

1. Expand Access To Coverage

We must make health care services accessible to every American. We need to provide incentives to empower low-income families to retain or purchase private health insurance. Second, we need to make these insurance policies portable. Americans should not have to worry that their insurance will be unaffordable or canceled if they lose their job or change careers. Finally, we must recruit, train, and retain qualified medical professionals to serve those in rural and underserved communities. I have supported legislation to bring foreign-born, U.S. trained doctors into rural and underserved communities. I have been a strong advocate for community pharmacists. I helped create and lead the Congressional Community Pharmacy Coalition and have sponsored legislation to help community pharmacies compete and prosper. Without medical professionals and local pharmacies, rural communities cannot survive.

2. Reform Our Malpractice Tort System

We must reform our medical malpractice liability system and reduce the frivolous lawsuits that lead to spiraling health care costs and insurance premiums. Currently, medical professionals are forced to practice “defensive medicine,” where costly tests and procedures are conducted primarily not to ensure the health of the patient, but as a safeguard against possible malpractice liability.

3. Bring our Health Care System into the 21st Century

We need to bring our outdated health care system into the 21st Century through the use of technology, which will streamline costs and reduce medical errors. Expanding the use of privacy-protected electronic health records will ensure patients and doctors have access to accurate, consistent medical histories. Additionally, we must ensure that rural hospitals have access to broadband internet lines in order to transfer medical records, research, and data online.

4. Increase Transparency in Health Care Quality and Costs

We need to provide individuals with incentives to have a say in the forms and expense of their health care treatments. By allowing Americans to utilize health savings accounts and other incentive plans, individuals are engaged and selective about their care and treatment options and preventative care increases. Also, individuals should have access to data on provider cost and quality, as well as treatment options and effectiveness, so that individuals have the

information necessary to make informed health care decisions.

5.□ Focus on Disease Prevention and Patient Wellness

We need to start placing as much emphasis on wellness as we do on illness. It costs less to invest in a person's wellness than it does to treat their illness. For too long, our health care system has been solely reactive by only offering treatment options. The time to be proactive about our mental, physical, and emotional wellness is now. Both wellness and treatment are essential to complete health care.

[Click here](#) to read my latest editorial on health care reform.